

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1438

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (T H R O U G H O U T)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR OEXC SY AG US
SUBJECT: PROSPECTIVE JOINT ALGERIAN-SYRIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION
TO THE UNITED STATES

1. DURING CODEL ZABLOCKI VISIT TO DAMASCUS IN EARLY JANUARY, CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE SYRIAN PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, DR. MUHSIN BILAL, SPOKE OF HIS DESIRE TO FORM A JOINT SYRIA-ALGERIAN DELEGATION TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES THIS SPRING. CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI WELCOMED THE IDEA BUT URGED THAT ADEQUATE TIME SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PREPARE FOR SUCH A VISIT IN VIEW OF THE MANY PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS WHICH PLANNED VISIT WASHINGTON. BILAL TOLD ME MARCH 13 HE HAD DISCUSSED FORMING SUCH A DELEGATION WITH VISITING ALGERIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS NOW IN DAMASCUS. HE HAS SECURED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE FROM ALGERIANS FOR JOINT DELEGATION AND NOW WISHES US TO CONTACT CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI TO ARRANGE FOR FORMAL INVITATIONS TO BE DELIVERED IN ALGIERS AND DAMASCUS.

2. PARLIAMENTARIANS EXPECT TO VISIT WASHINGTON BUT STRESS THEIR HOPE TO DEVOTE MOST OF THEIR TIME TO SPEAKING AT UNIVERSITIES AND BEFORE AUDIENCES OUTSIDE NEW YORK, WASHINGTON AND OTHER FREQUENTLY VISITED MAJOR
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CENTERS.

3. IN MARCH 13 CONVERSATION, BILAL REVEALED THAT ALGERIA AND SYRIA WERE CONTEMPLATING EXPANDING DELEGATION INTO A TRIPARTITE ONE, BRINGING ALONG REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) WHO WOULD TRAVEL ON EITHER ALGERIAN OR SYRIAN PASSPORTS. BILAL SAID HE HAD

MENTIONED THIS POSSIBILITY TO CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI. AMBASSADOR REMARKED HE HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN THAT CONVERSATION BETWEEN BILAL AND ZABLOCKI BUT HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT IDEA WOULD BE AWKWARD FOR ZABLOCKI TO ACCEPT AND IMPOSSIBLE FOR STATE DEPARTMENT. NOTED USG HAS NO RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL, THE PARENT OF THE PLO, EVEN THOUGH IT ALSO INCLUDES NON-PLO PALESTINIANS IN ITS RANKS. AMBASSADOR ASKED IF ALGERIANS AND SYRIANS WERE MAKING THIS A CONDITION OF THE VISIT. BILAL RESPONDED THIS WAS NOT THEIR INTENTION BUT REQUESTED THAT WE CHECK IDEA OUT WITH WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR AGREED TO DO SO.

4. AMBASSADOR THEN CONTACTED MEMBER OF VISITING ALGERIAN DELEGATION, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO DAMASCUS OTHMANE SAADI. JUDGING BY THIS CONVERSATION, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ALGERIAN THINKING ABOUT SUCH VISIT HAS NOT DEVELOPED VERY FAR. SAADI SAIDS THAT MEMBERS OF HIS DELEGATION WERE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IDEA BUT FORMAL APPROVAL WOULD HAVE TO COME THROUGH THE PRESIDENT OF ALGERIAN PEOPLE'S COUNCIL. AT THAT POINT, WE REMARKED THAT NEXT STEP SHOULD PERHAPS BE CONTACT BETWEEN THIS EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON TO SEE IF AGREED DATES COULD BE WORKED OUT WITH CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI, WITH US EMBASSY ALGIERS THEN SERVING AS CONACT POINT WITH ALGERIAN SIDE. SAADI CONCURRED.

5. BILAL IS THINKING IN TERMS OF A 15-20-DAY VISIT
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WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE WOULD BE PRESENTATION OF ARAB POINT OF VIEW IN ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. DELEGATION WOULD CONSIST OF ABOUT THREE MEMBERS EACH FROM ALGERIAN AND SYRIAN PEOPLE'S COUNCILS. BILAL HIMSELF WOULD PARTICIPATE.

6. COMMENT: WE ASSUME THAT IDEA OF HAVING DELEGATION INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM PNC IS NON-STARTER. MAKING THIS CLEAR FROM BEGINNING WILL AVOID EMBARRASSMENT TO GOA, SARG AND OURSELVES. OTHERWISE, PROSPECT OF A JOINT VISIT IS PROMISING AND I HOPE IT CAN BE ARRANGED. IF DEPARTMENT PERCEIVES NO OBJECTION, REQUEST CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI BE NOTIFIED OF BILAL'S CONTINUED INTEREST IN SENDING DELEGATION TO TOUR STATES AND ASK IF ZABLOCKI AGREEABLE TO RECEIVING DELEGATION AROUND MID-APRIL.

7. QUESTION OF FINANCING HAS NOT YET BEEN RAISED BUT I PRESUME SYRIANS AT LEAST ARE THINKING IN TERMS OF AN IV GRANT SIMILAR TO THE INVITATION WE EXTENDED AND PEOPLE'S COUNCIL ACCEPTED LAST YEAR. THIS WOULD PRESUMABLY MEAN SIX IV GRANTS FOR THE JOINT DELEGATION.
MURPHY

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